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US expects new agreement on Poland's debt

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WASHINGTON—Senior Administration officials expect that growing signs of consensus within Poland on necessary economic reforms will lead to an historic formal agreement in less than two weeks deferring repayment of some of Poland's staggering \$27 billion debt to the West.

Assuming that neither a Soviet invasion nor a Polish government crackdown on workers, farmers and intellectuals occurs before then, the US officials say they expect 15 Western creditors to sign a formal debt rescheduling agreement in Paris during the week of April 28.

But to maintain some leverage against any future resort to force or a failure to implement agreed-on reforms, the United States is insisting that debt reschedulings occur only for a year at a time and that reviews take place very six months to ensure that Warsaw is scrupulously living up to its end of the bargain.

In addition, Western creditors have agreed to leave a gap in Polish economic needs of about \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion a year which the Soviet Union will be expected to fill.

"We've made very clear to both Moscow and Warsaw that the Soviet Union is going to have to do its share in the bail-out," one source declared. "We don't expect the Russians to say they agree, but we'll be able to monitor their performance through published economic statistics."

In the meantime, Western intelligence sources report a significant pulling back of Soviet, East German and Czech military units to their garrisons after weeks of exercises in and around Poland.

"We honestly don't know whether the buildup was part of a cleverly orchestrated bluff to convince the Poles that a nationwide strike would bring intervention, or represented preparations for an invasion on the chance that a strike would cause a loss of Communist Party control," one source declared.

"It is apparent, however, that after all the exercises and practices the Russians have staged over the past several months, they have a much-heightened capability to move in quickly if called upon to do so," the source said.

A number of top US officials believe that Prime Minister Wojciech Jaruzelski secretly negotiated advance agreement both with leaders of the Independent Solidarity labor union and with the Catholic Church in Poland for the measures he announced before the parliament last Friday.

"Everyone in Poland realizes that Jaruzelski did the minimum necessary to keep the wolf from the door," one official said.

He noted, for instance, that both Solidarity leader Lech Walesa and Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski, Poland's Roman Catholic primate, have lately issued public statements calling for restraint and moderation rather than renewed confrontation.

Administration analysts say they do not foresee, however, an absence of new crises between now and the Polish Party Congress in mid-July when a new Central Committee and a new Politburo are expected to be selected.

"There are likely to be new tense periods, for instance, over the farmers' continuing pressure for a Rural Solidarity organization and over the demand for a much relaxed law on censorship," one official said. "It's even possible that the Party Congress will slip once again."

But he and other sources expressed the hope that enough consensus is emerging in Poland to prevent such crises from getting out of hand.

They point out that Jaruzelski's successful request for the parliament to pass a resolution calling for a two-month ban on strikes does not have the force of law and thus does not vitiate last August's Gdansk agreement conferring on Solidarity the right to strike. Jaruzelski had threatened to resign if the Parliament did not pass the resolution.

Furthermore, when the prime minister declared that Poland might not be able to live up to all the economic implications of the Gdansk agreements, he was underlining a point widely, if reluctantly, understood within the ranks of Solidarity.

They note, in that regard, that the coal miners have privately agreed to go back to a six-day week if it is done in the context of a Solidarity-agreed package of economic reforms.

Solidarity has representation on the Economic Reform Commission, which is hammering out a long-range economic plan to include greater state aid to private farmers, more stress on private craft and service businesses and decentralization of industrial decision-making.

Western creditors, both governments and private banks, will focus on improving Poland's balance of payments, US officials said. But the necessary underpinning of an improved balance of payments is a total revamping of Poland's economy.

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"They continue to make impressive gains in working out a new economic plan," one source said. "But they've done that before. What's key now is that they discuss this thoroughly to build public support and that they implement the plan assiduously, including austerity and other measures that may be hard to make stick."

The Reagan Administration continues to study requests for new credits from Warsaw, officials say. But they stress that the United States, which holds about 12 percent of Poland's Western debt, already is contributing about 25 percent of the West's recent moves to aid the Polish economy.

For example, the recent US decision to provide \$93 million worth of food and take payment not in hard currency but Polish currency was "virtually a gift." As one official put it, "The Polish zloty is almost worthless."

"It's too early to say if there will be a new American contribution," one source said. "But we feel the Europeans and the Russians now must do a great deal more."